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## THIRD ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION.

TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION,

GENTLEMEN,—After discharging, for another year, the duties of the office you have conferred upon me, I respectfully submit my Third Annual Report. During the last year, I have visited all the counties in the State, and met, in convention, at central and convenient places, such friends of Education, as chose to assemble; I have maintained an active correspondence with all parts of the Commonwealth, on subjects pertaining to the means and processes of popular instruction; and I have superintended the preparation and printing of the Annual Abstract of the School Returns for the school year 1838-9. The Abstract is a document of unusual value and interest, from the fact of its containing selections from the reports of School Committees, made by them, last Spring, to their respective towns;—copies of which reports were forwarded to the office of the Secretary of State, in conformity with the existing provisions of law. As, in the special Report, made to the Board, and prefixed to the Abstract, I have given a brief statement of its contents, and of the principles observed in preparing it, I will here only add, that I regard it as one of the most useful documents on the subject ever presented to the people of the State. Our system of Common Schools will have advanced very far towards perfection, when all the wise and excellent suggestions contained in that document shall have been reduced to practice.

Having collected, arranged, and condensed, a considerable number of facts on a few important topics, I proceed to lay the results before the Board; and I take the liberty to accompany them with such views and conclusions, as a careful consideration of them has suggested to me.

I feel fully justified in affirming, that the prospects of the rising generation are daily growing brighter, by means of the increasing light which is shed upon them from our Common Schools. I refer here, more particularly, to such proofs, as are hardly susceptible of being condensed into statistical tables, or even of being presented as isolated facts; these speak for themselves. But I refer to such indications of returning health, as prove to the watchful attendant that the crisis of the malady has passed. Stronger feelings and firmer convictions of the importance of our Common Schools are taking possession of the public mind, and where they have not yet manifested themselves in any outward and visible improvement, they are silently and gradually working to that end.

In determining the rate of annual advancement, however, which the friends of this cause are authorized reasonably to expect, it should not be forgotten, that all improvements in the system depend, ultimately, upon the people themselves, and upon the school officers, whom, in their several towns and districts, they see fit to elect. All improvements in the schools,

therefore, suppose and require a simultaneous and corresponding improvement in public sentiment, and in the liberality of the citizens, who, by a major vote, from year to year, measure out the pecuniary means for their support, and elect the officers who are to superintend the application of those means. Progress, which must be so thorough, must necessarily be slow. But the thoroughness is a compensation for the slowness; for, when a revolution is once wrought, it will be enduring. The Legislature, having conferred upon the Board of Education no authority, as to the amount of money to be raised, the teachers to be employed, the books, apparatus, or other instruments, of instruction to be used, the condition of the houses in which the schools are taught; nor, indeed, as to any other subject, which can, in the slightest degree, abridge the power, or touch the property, of towns or districts; the responsibility, in all these respects, continues to rest where it always has rested, and where, it is to be hoped, it always will rest, with the towns and districts themselves. On these points, encouragement may be highly beneficial; compulsion would counterwork its own purposes.

Hence, it is obvious, that, if the Board or the Legislature should devise and promulgate the wisest system imaginable, and define the exact processes by which it could be executed, and all its fruits realized, the administration of that system must still be left with the local authorities. In the last stage of the process, and at the very point, where the means are applied to the objects, they must pass through the hands of the town and district officers, and of the teachers whom they employ. In our system of Public Instruction, therefore, it is emphatically true, that the influences flowing from the Legislature, or from any advisory body, may have their quality entirely changed, by being assimilated to the character and views of the men, through whose hands they eventually pass;—just as the nutritious juices, which ascend from the roots of a tree, may lose their original properties and be made to produce fruits of various flavor, according to the nature of the engrafted scions, through whose transforming pores they flow. Wherever, therefore, we find improvements in the schools, it is a gratifying proof, that higher views are prevailing in the community in which those improvements originate.

I advert to these facts respecting the authority, or rather the want of authority, in the Board, and their entire dependence upon the efficient coöperation of the public, because I occasionally meet with misapprehensions respecting their office, and powers, and consequent duties; some persons looking to the Board for action, in matters of which they have not the slightest official cognizance, and others deploring their possession of powers, of which there is no trace nor indication to be found, either in the law which created them, or in any of their official or unofficial proceedings.

It will not be expected, that I should communicate, in detail, the proofs, that might be adduced, of an increased and increasing public interest in our Common Schools; but it may be gratifying to the Board to be made acquainted with a few of them. In Greenfield, the shire town of Franklin county, containing a population of nearly two thousand, the sum raised by taxes, for the support of schools, in each of the years 1836 and 1837, was eight hundred dollars, only; and the schoolhouse, in their central district, was mainly valuable, as showing how schoolhouses should not be built. During the last year, the sum raised by taxes in the town, was increased to one thousand and seven hundred dollars, and the central district, (which has been incorporated, as a separate school district,) has provided itself with a large and beautiful house, at an expense of three thousand and three hundred dollars, and has established an annual school therein. It remains to be seen what influence the incorporation of the central district will exert upon the exterior districts in the town. The originators of the measure anticipate the most favorable results, and they seem to be almost

pledged to their fellow-townsmen for their realization. Roxbury was one of the towns, required by law to keep a town school ; but, since the year 1826, when the present provision of the law, in regard to town schools, was enacted, it has belonged to that large class of towns which have non-complied with the requisition. The largest sum, as it appears by the Abstracts heretofore raised by that town, is five thousand dollars. This year, the town has raised the sum of fourteen thousand and five hundred dollars, and has established the town school required by law, and voted to its teacher one of the most liberal salaries given in the State. The town of Gloucester has also put in operation a town school. In Phillipston, in Worcester county, five new and commodious schoolhouses have been erected; and the town of Chatham, in Barnstable county, raised, last March, four thousand dollars, for the improvement of their schoolhouses, only. Until the present year, the principal district in the town of Edgartown, in Duke's county, had maintained its school upon so extraordinary a plan, that, in two or three important particulars, there was little possibility of its becoming worse. This district had made no provision for its children under seven years of age. Between the ages of seven and sixteen, there were about two hundred children belonging to it. For the accommodation of all these children, it had but one schoolhouse, which was old, small, and with but one room, and that room incapable of receiving more than about forty pupils, i. e., one fifth of the whole number of children, between the ages of seven and sixteen. This number was divided into five classes, which took their turns in attending the school,—one class attending one fifth part of the year, or about ten weeks, and then being dismissed for the remaining forty-two weeks of the year ; then another class attending the same length of time, to be dismissed, in its turn ; and so on, through the five classes. Surely, it would be unreasonable to anticipate much improvement in the children, under this reversal of the proper length between term-time and vacation. While, in many other places in the State, not more favorably situated than this, children were in school forty or forty-two weeks of the year, and out of it, but ten or twelve, these were in it but ten, and out of it forty-two. But as soon as the attention of that people was turned to the demands of this great interest, and to a comparison of their own, with the condition of other places, with a promptitude and liberality, highly creditable to them, they made immediate provision for the instruction of their children, between the ages of four and seven years, and they have just completed a commodious house, having two rooms, and of more than four times the capacity of the former. Other places might be referred to, such as Salisbury, in Essex county, Hanson, in Plymouth county, &c. &c., which, in erecting schoolhouses, have not been satisfied, with estimating the aggregate number of cubic feet in forty or fifty children, and graduating the capacity of the schoolroom by the result ; but, in the construction of their houses, have provided for the comfort and health of the pupils, and for the best moral and social influences upon their character. The city of Boston is erecting twelve large and elegant schoolrooms, this season. One house alone will cost, by estimate, twenty thousand dollars, and is intended to be constructed, throughout, on the most improved plan. Taking all the constituents of a good schoolhouse into the account, decidedly the best, I have yet seen in the State, is one, erected, during the last year, in the upper district of the town of Chelsea.

It must not, however, be inferred, that the most extensive reform is not still necessary, in regard to those edifices, where the business of education, for the great mass of the children in the State, is carried on. By what I have learned from authentic sources, and have seen, in three annual circuits through all parts of the Commonwealth, respecting its three thousand schoolhouses, I am convinced that there is no other class of buildings within our limits, erected either for the permanent or the temporary residence of



our native population, so inconvenient, so uncomfortable, so dangerous to health by their construction within, or so unsightly and repulsive in their appearance without. Every other class of edifices, whether public or private, has felt the hand of reform. Churches, courthouses, even jails and prisons, are rebuilt, or remodelled, great regard being paid, in most cases, to ornament, and, in all cases, to health, to personal convenience, and accommodation. But the schoolhouse, which leads directly towards the church, or rather may be considered as its vestibule, and which furnishes to the vast majority of our children, the only public means they will ever enjoy, for qualifying themselves to profit by its counsels, its promises, its warnings, its consolations ;—the schoolhouse, which leads directly from the courthouse, from the jail and from the prison, and is, for the mass of our children, the great preventive and safeguard against being called or forced into them, as litigants or as criminals ;—this class of buildings, all over the State, stands in afflicting contrast with all the others. The courthouses, which are planned and erected under the advice and control of the county authorities, and of the leading men in the county, for themselves, and in which they spend but a few terms in the year, and the meetinghouses, where the parents spend but a few hours in a week, are provided with costly embellishments, and with every appurtenance, that can gratify taste, or subserve comfort ; but the houses, where the children, in the most susceptible period of their lives, spend from thirty to forty hours in a week, seem to be deserted by all public care, and abandoned to cheerlessness and dilapidation. I do not think there are more than a hundred of the three thousand schoolhouses in the State, erected in a style at all superior, even if equal, to that of the very poorest public buildings, of any other kind, in the very poorest and most sparsely populated portions of the Commonwealth. Leaving the city of Boston out of the account, it would be easy to select a hundred churches, which the parents have built for themselves, worth all the three thousand schoolhouses collectively, which they have built for the children. At the rate of one hundred a year, it will take more than a quarter of a century to renovate them all. Of many of them, however, it may be predicted with certainty, that, however long they may be able to endure the weight of public opinion, their own weight they cannot long sustain.

To those, whose views of public and private duty can never be satisfied, by any thing short of a universal education for the people, it will be gratifying to be informed, that a new interest has been excited during the last year, in behalf of the children of persons employed upon our public works. This class of children, heretofore, has not shared in the provisions for education, made by our laws, and has rarely been embraced in any of the numerous plans for moral improvement, devised and sustained by private charity ; and, hence, they have been growing up in the midst of our institutions, uninstructed even in those rudiments of knowledge, without which self-education is hardly practicable. During the last year, a few inhabitants of the town of Middlefield, (which is situated in the western part of Hampshire county,) commiserating the destitute condition of the children along the line of the rail-road, in their vicinity, took active measures to supply them with the means of instruction. A gentleman of that town, Mr. Alexander Ingham, was the first to engage in, and has been most active in carrying on, this Samaritan enterprise. The good example extended, and a considerable number of children, along the line of work, were soon gathered, either into the public schools, or, where that was impracticable, into schools established expressly for them, at private expense. At the Common School Convention in the county of Hampden, held in the month of August last, the condition of these children, and the necessity of some further measures in their behalf, constituted one of the topics of inquiry and discussion. A committee was appointed, of which Mr. Ingham was chairman, to collect the facts of the case. From this committee I have learned, that there were, in

the month of September last, more than three hundred children, between the ages of four and sixteen, belonging to the laborers on the rail-road, west of Connecticut river, who were not considered as entitled to the privileges of the public schools, or were in such a local situation as not to be able to attend them. A pregnant fact also, in relation to the subject is, that, in the enumeration of all the children of all ages, belonging to that class of people, "a large proportion of them are under the age of four years." Owing to efforts since made by private individuals, a very large majority of all these children, who are of a suitable age, are now enjoying the benefits of Common School education.

Another subject, respecting which I have sought for information from all authentic sources, and to which I have given especial attention in my circuit through the State, is the observance or non-observance of the law, "for the better instruction of youth, employed in manufacturing establishments." This law was enacted in April, 1836, and was to take effect on the first day of April, 1837. The substance of its provisions is, that no owner, agent, or superintendent, of any manufacturing establishment shall employ any child, under the age of fifteen years, to labor in such establishment, unless such child shall have attended some public or private day-school, where instruction is given by a legally qualified teacher, at least three months of the twelve months, next preceding any and every year, in which such child shall be so employed. The penalty for each violation is fifty dollars. The law has now been in operation sufficiently long, to make manifest the intentions of those to whom its provisions apply, and whether those humane provisions are likely to be observed or defeated. From the information obtained, I feel fully authorized to say, that, in the great majority of cases, the law is obeyed. But it is my painful duty also to say, that, in some places, it has been uniformly and systematically disregarded. The law is best observed, in the largest manufacturing places. In several of the most extensive manufacturing villages and districts, all practicable measures are taken to prevent a single instance of violation. Some establishments have conducted most generously towards the schools; and, in one case, (at Waltham,) a corporation, besides paying its proportion of taxes, for the support of the public schools in the town, has gratuitously erected three school-houses,—the last in 1837, a neat, handsome, modern, stone building, two stories in height,—and maintained schools therein, at a charge, in the whole, upon the corporate funds, of a *principal* sum of more than seven thousand dollars. It would be improper for me here, to be more particular than to say, that these generous acts have been done by the "*Boston Manufacturing Company*;" though all will regret, that the identity of the individual members, who have performed these praiseworthy deeds, should be lost in the generality of the corporate name.

Comparatively speaking, there seems to have been far greater disregard of the law, by private individuals and by small corporations, especially where the premises are rented from year to year, or from term to term, than by the owners or agents of large establishments. Private individuals, renting an establishment for one or for a few years, intending to realize from it what profits they can, and then to abandon it, and remove from the neighborhood or town where it is situated, may be supposed to feel less permanent interest in the condition of the people, who are growing up around them, and they are less under the control of public opinion in the vicinity. But, without seeking an explanation of the cause, there cannot be a doubt as to the fact.

It is obvious, that the consent of two parties is necessary, to the infraction of this law, and to the infliction of this highest species of injustice upon the children whom it was designed to protect. Not only must the employer pursue a course of action, by which the godlike powers and capacities of the human soul are wrought into thoroughmade products of ignorance, and

misery, and vice, with as much certainty and celerity, as his raw materials of wool or cotton are wrought into fabrics for the market, by his own machinery ; but the parent, also, must be willing to convert the holy relation of parent and child, into the unholy one of master and slave, and to sell his child into ransomless bondage, for the pittance of money he can earn. Yet, strange to say, there are many parents, not only of our immigrant, but of our native, population, so lost to the sacred nature of the relation they sustain towards the children whom they have brought into all the solemn realities of existence, that they go from town to town, seeking opportunities to consign them to unbroken, bodily toil, although it involves the deprivation of all the means of intellectual and moral growth ; thus pandering to their own vicious appetites, by adopting the most efficient measures, to make their offspring as vicious as themselves.

If, in a portion of the manufacturing districts, in the State, a regular and systematic obedience is paid to the law, while, in other places, it is regularly and systematically disregarded, the inevitable consequences to the latter will be obvious, upon a moment's reflection. The neighborhood, or town, where the law is broken, will soon become the receptacle of the poorest, most vicious, and abandoned, parents, who are bringing up their children to be also as poor, vicious, and abandoned, as themselves. The whole class of parents, who cannot obtain employment for their children, at one place, but are welcomed at another, will circulate through the body politic, until at last, they will settle down as permanent residents, in the latter ; like the vicious humors of the natural body, which, being thrown off by every healthy part, at last accumulate and settle upon a diseased spot. Every breach of this law, therefore, inflicts direct and positive injustice, not only upon the children employed, but upon all the industrious and honest communities in which they are employed ; because its effect will be to fill those communities with paupers and criminals ;—or, at least, with a class of persons, who, without being absolute, technical paupers, draw their subsistence, in a thousand indirect ways, from the neighborhood, where they reside ; and, without being absolute criminals, in the eye of the law, still commit a thousand injurious, predatory acts, more harassing and annoying to the peace and security of a village, than many classes of positive crimes.

While water-power only is used for manufacturing purposes, a natural limit is affixed, in every place, to the extension of manufactories. The power being all taken up, in any place, the further investment of capital, and the employment of an increased number of operatives, must cease. While we restrict ourselves to the propulsion of machinery by water, therefore, it is impossible, that we should have such an extensive manufacturing district as, for instance, that of Manchester, in England, because we have no streams of sufficient magnitude for the purpose. But Massachusetts is already the greatest manufacturing State in the Union. Her best sites are all taken up, and yet her disposition to manufacture appears not to be checked. Under such circumstances, it seems not improbable, that steam-power will be resorted to. Indeed, this is already done, to some extent. Should such improvements be made in the use of steam, or such new markets be opened for the sale of manufactured products, that capitalists, by selecting sites where the expense of transportation, both of the raw material and of the finished article, may be so reduced as, on the whole, to make it profitable to manufacture by steam, then that agency will be forthwith employed ; and, if steam is employed, there is no assignable limit to the amount of a manufacturing population, that may be gathered into a single manufacturing district. If, therefore, we would not have, in any subsequent time, a population like that of the immense city of Manchester, where great numbers of the laboring population live in the filthiest streets, and mostly in houses, which are framed back to back, so that, in no case, is there any yard behind them, but all ingress and egress, for all purposes, is between the front side



of the house and the public street,—if we would not have such a population, we must not only have preventive laws, but we must see that no cupidity, no contempt of the public welfare for the sake of private gain, is allowed openly to violate, or clandestinely to evade, them. It would, indeed, be most lamentable and self-contradictory, if, with all our institutions, devised and prepared on the hypothesis of common intelligence and virtue, we should rear a class of children, to be set apart, and, as it were, dedicated, to ignorance and vice.

After presenting to the Board one further consideration, I will leave this subject. It is obvious, that children of ten, twelve, or fourteen, years of age, may be steadily worked in our manufactories, without any schooling, and that this cruel deprivation may be persevered in for six, eight, or ten, years, and yet, during all this period, no very alarming outbreak shall occur, to rouse the public mind from its guilty slumber. The children are in their years of minority, and they have no control over their own time, or their own actions. The bell is to them, what the water-wheel and the main shaft are to the machinery, which they superintend. The wheel revolves, and the machinery must go; the bell rings, and the children must assemble. In their hours of work, they are under the police of the establishment; at other times, they are under the police of the neighborhood. Hence, this state of things may continue for years, and the peace of the neighborhood remain undisturbed, except, perhaps, by a few nocturnal or sabbath-day depredations. The ordinary movements of society may go on, without any shocks or collisions; as, in the human system, a disease may work at the vitals, and gain a fatal ascendancy there, before it manifests itself on the surface. But the punishment for such an offence will not be remitted, because its infliction is postponed. The retribution, indeed, is not postponed; it only awaits the full completion of the offence; for this is a crime of such magnitude, that it requires years for the criminal to perpetrate it in, and to finish it off thoroughly, in all its parts. But, when the children pass from the condition of restraint, to that of freedom, from years of enforced, but impatient, servitude, to that independence, for which they have secretly pined, and to which they have looked forward, not merely as the period of emancipation, but of long-delayed indulgence; when they become strong in the passions and propensities that grow up spontaneously, but are weak in the moral powers that control them, and blind in the intellect which foresees their tendencies; when, according to the course of our political institutions, they go, by one bound, from the political nothingness of a child, to the political sovereignty of a man; then, for that people, who so cruelly neglected and injured them, there will assuredly come a day of retribution. It scarcely needs to be added, on the other hand, that, if the wants of the spiritual nature of a child, in the successive stages of its growth, are duly supplied; then, a regularity in manual employment is converted from a servitude into a useful habit of diligence, and the child grows up in a daily perception of the wonder-working power of industry, and in the daily realization of the trophies of victorious labor. A majority of the most useful men, who have ever lived, were formed under the happy necessity of mingling bodily with mental exertion.

But by far the most important subject, respecting which I have sought for information, during the year, remains to be noticed. While we are in little danger of over-estimating the value of Common Schools, yet we shall err, egregiously, if we regard them as ends, and not as means. A forgetfulness of this distinction would send the mass of our children, of both sexes, into the world, scantily provided either with the ability, or the disposition, to perform even the most ordinary duties of life. Common Schools derive their value from the fact, that they are an instrument, more extensively applicable to the whole mass of the children, than any other instrument ever yet devised. They are an instrument, by which the good men in society can

send redeeming influences to those children, who suffer under the calamity of vicious parentage, and evil domestic associations. The world is full of lamentable proofs, that the institution of the family may exist, for an indefinite number of generations, without mitigating the horrors of barbarism. But the institution of Common Schools is the offspring of an advanced state of civilization, and is incapable of coexisting with barbarian life ; because, should barbarism prevail, it would destroy the schools ; should the schools prevail, they would destroy barbarism. They are the only civil institution, capable of extending its beneficent arms to embrace and to cultivate, in all parts of its nature, every child that comes into the world. Nor can it be forgotten, that there is no other instrumentality, which has done, or can do, so much, to inspire that universal reverence for knowledge, which incites to its acquisition. Still, these schools are means, and not ends. They confer instruments for the acquisition of an object, but they are not the object itself. As they now are, or, indeed, are ever likely to become, our young men and young women will be most insufficiently prepared, to meet the various demands which life will make upon them, if they possess nothing but what these schools bestow.

In my last Report, I communicated to the Board some general facts, respecting the lamentable prevalence of mechanical, instead of intelligent, reading in our schools ; from which it appeared, that the exercise of reading, to which so much time is devoted, was, to a woful extent, performed by the machinery of the organs of speech, and hence was unaccompanied by any vital, receiving, assorting, adjudicating, action of the mind. I, also, briefly indicated the difference between the vast amount of knowledge, which can be acquired through the medium of intelligent reading, compared or contrasted, with the scantiness of information, obtainable in all other ways ; showing that, without the ability to read, our knowledge is confined to a mere handbreadth of space, and to a mere span of time ; while, with this ability, we are enlarged from our imprisonment into a region that has no circumference ; we are endued with a power of being present, at pleasure, with the distant and the past ; we can visit, with the rapidity of thought, any nation or spot on the surface of the globe, and become the coeval of time, and a contemporary with the great names and events of all historic eras.

Having, then, the object of a powerful and an exemplary people in view, the next step, in the inquiry, is obviously this,—after the rising generation have acquired habits of intelligent reading, in our schools, *what shall they read ?* for, with no books to read, the power of reading will be useless ; and, with bad books to read, the consequences will be as much worse than ignorance, as wisdom is better. What books, then, are there, accessible to the great mass of the children in the State, adapted to their moral and intellectual wants, and fitted to nourish their minds with the elements of uprightness and wisdom ? This is the principal, the ultimate, inquiry ; the other was strictly preliminary to this, and, without it, comparatively useless.

Let any person go into one of our country towns or districts, of average size, consisting, as most of them do, of an agricultural population, interspersed with mechanics, and, here and there, a few manufacturers, and inquire, from house to house, what books are possessed, and he will probably find the Scriptures, and a few school books, in almost every family. These are protected, by law, even in the hands of an insolvent ; so that the poor are as secure in their possession as the rich. In the houses of professional men,—the minister, the lawyer, the physician,—he would find small professional libraries, intermixed with some miscellaneous works, not of a professional character ; in the houses of religious persons, a few religious books, of this or that class, according to the faith of the owner ; in the houses of the more wealthy, where wealth is, fortunately, combined with intelligence and good taste, some really useful and instructive books ; but



where the wealth is, unfortunately, united with a love of display, or with feeble powers of thought, he would find a few elegantly-bound Annuals, and novels of a recent emission. What he would find in other houses,—and these the majority,—would be few, and of a most miscellaneous character; books which had found their way thither, rather by chance than by design, and ranging, in their character, between very good and very bad. Rarely, in such a town as I have supposed, will a book be found, which treats of the nature, object, and abuses, of different kinds of governments, and of the basis, and constitution, and fabric, of our own; or one on economical or statistical science; or a treatise on general ethics and the philosophy of the human mind; or popular and intelligible explanations of the applications of science to agriculture and the useful arts; or the processes by which the latter are made so eminently serviceable to man. Rarely, will any book be found, partaking of the character of an Encyclopædia, by a reference to which, thousands of interesting questions, as they daily arise, might be solved, and great accessions to the stock of valuable knowledge be imperceptibly made; quite as rarely, will any books, containing the Lives of Eminent British or American Statesmen be found, or books treating of our ante-revolutionary history; and most rarely of all, will any book be found on Education,—education at home, physical, intellectual, and those rudiments of a moral and religious education, in which all agree,—the most important subject, that can possibly be named to parent, patriot, philanthropist, or Christian. And, in the almost total absence of books, adapted to instruct parents how to educate their children, so there are quite as few which are adapted to the capacities of the children themselves, and might serve, in some secondary degree, to supply the place of the former. Some exceptions would, of course, be expected, where so many particulars are grouped under so few heads; but, from all I have been able to learn, after improving every opportunity for inquiry and correspondence, I am led to believe, that, as it regards the *private* ownership of books, the above may be taken as a fair medium for the State. In small towns, almost wholly rural in their occupations, the books, though fewer, may generally be better; while in cities, and large towns, though more numerous, yet a larger proportion of them is worse. Whatever means exist, then, either for inspiring or for gratifying a love of reading, in the great mass of the rising generation, are mainly to be found, if found at all, in public libraries.

As the tastes and habits of the future men and women, in regard to reading, will be only an enlargement and expansion of the tastes and habits of the present children, it seemed to me one of the most desirable of all facts, to learn, as far as practicable, under what general influences, those tastes and habits are, now, daily forming. For who can think, without emotion, and who can remain inactive, under the conviction that every day, which now passes, is, by the immutable law of cause and effect, predestinating the condition of the community, twenty, thirty, or forty, years hence; that the web of their character and fortunes is now going through the loom, to come out of it, at that time, of worthy or of worthless quality, beautified with colors and shapes of excellence, or deformed by hideousness, just according to the kind of the woof which we are daily weaving into its texture? Every book, which a child reads with intelligence, is, like a cast of the weaver's shuttle, adding another thread to the indestructible web of existence.

In the general want of private libraries, therefore, I have endeavored to learn what number of public libraries exist; how many volumes they contain, and what are their general character, scope, and tendency; how many persons have access to them, or,—which is the most material point,—how many persons do *not* have access to them; and, finally, how many of the books are adapted to prepare children to be free citizens and men, fathers

and mothers, even in the most limited signification of those vastly comprehensive words. It seemed to me, therefore, that nothing could have greater interest or significance, than an inventory of the means of knowledge, and the encouragements to self-education, possessed by the present and the rising generation.

Simultaneously with this inquiry, I have pursued a collateral one,—not so closely, although closely, connected with the main object. A class of institutions has lately sprung up, in this State, universally known by the name of Lyceums, or Mechanics' Institutes, before some of which, courses of popular lectures, on literary or scientific subjects, are annually delivered, while others possess libraries and reading-rooms; and, in a very few cases, both these objects are combined. These institutions have the same general purpose in view, as public libraries, viz., that of diffusing instructive and entertaining knowledge, and of exciting a curiosity to acquire it; though they are greatly inferior to libraries, in point of efficiency. As the proportion of young persons, who attend these lectures, and frequent these reading-rooms, compared with the whole number of attendants, is much greater than the proportion they bear to the whole people, the institutions may justly be regarded as one of the means, now in operation, for enlightening the youth of the State. At any rate, an inventory of the means of general intelligence, which did not include these institutions, would justly be regarded as incomplete.

For the purpose of obtaining authentic information, on the above-mentioned subjects, I addressed to school committees, and other intelligent men, residing, respectively, in every town in the Commonwealth, the following statement and inquiries:—

“Among the ‘means of Popular Education,’ respecting which it is my duty to seek for information, is the existence of town, social, or district school, libraries, composed of books, suited to the wants of children and youth, and adapted to their state of mental advancement. Other means of popular education are to be found in Mechanics' Institutes, and Lyceums, Literary Societies, or associations under any name, instituted for the delivery of courses of popular lectures.

“As it would be highly useful and interesting to know what means exist, either for cultivating or gratifying habits of reading among the young; and also, to what extent persons of a more advanced age avail themselves of the researches and attainments of other minds, through the medium of regular courses of lectures, on literary or scientific subjects, I take the liberty to propose the following questions:

“1. Is there, in your town, any town, social, or district school, library?

“2. If so, how many, what number of volumes do they contain, and what is their present value, as nearly as you can estimate it?

“3. What number of persons have a right of access to them?

“4. Are the books, of which they consist, adapted to the capacities of children and youth, and have they good intellectual and moral tendencies? Please be as particular as your convenience will allow, respecting the character of the books.

“5. Have you any Mechanics' Institute in your town, either with, or without reading-rooms?

“6. If any, what number of members belong to it?

“7. Have you Lyceums, Literary Societies, or associations under any name, before which courses of popular lectures, on literary or scientific subjects, have been delivered, within the year last past?

“8. If any, what number of persons have usually attended the lectures?

“9. What amount of money has been expended for lectures, within the last year?

“10. What is the probable amount of the incidental expenses, for lecture rooms, fuel, lights, attendance, &c.?

"11. At what time, were the above institutions established ; and are they in a flourishing or declining condition ?"

*The following is an account of the Libraries in the different counties of the State.*

## SUFFOLK COUNTY.

Population, (May, 1837,) . . . 81,984.

Number of Social Libraries, . . . . .	36
Number of volumes, . . . . .	81,881
Estimated value, . . . . .	\$ 130,055
Number of proprietors, or persons having access in their own right, . . . . .	3,885

Thirty-two thousand of these volumes belong to the Boston Athenæum.

In addition to the above, there are ten Circulating Libraries, containing about twenty-eight thousand volumes, and estimated to be worth about ten thousand dollars. About three thousand two hundred persons are supposed to have taken books from these libraries, during the last year.

There are fifteen Common or District School Libraries, in the city, which is almost one third part of the whole number in this State.\*

## ESSEX COUNTY.

Population, (May, 1837,) . . . 93,689.

Number of Social Libraries, . . . . .	31
Number of volumes, . . . . .	22,597
Estimated value, . . . . .	\$20,383
Number of proprietors or persons having access in their own right, . . . . .	2,435

One town has made no return, viz., Salisbury, population, 2,675.

These libraries include the Salem Athenæum, which contains 8,000, and the library of the Salem Mechanics' Association, which contains 1,800 volumes.

## MIDDLESEX COUNTY.

Population, (May, 1837,) . . . 98,565.

Number of Social Libraries, . . . . .	43
Number of volumes, . . . . .	18,957
Estimated value, . . . . .	\$6,403
Number of proprietors, or persons having access in their own right, . . . . .	3,694

Eight towns have made no returns, viz., Acton, population, 1,071 ; Bedford, population, 858 ; Chelmsford, population, 1613 ; Malden, population, 2303 ; Pepperell, population, 1586 ; Sherburne, population, 1073 ; Sudbury, population, 1388 ; Townsend, population, 1749. Total population not heard from, in Middlesex county, 11,641.

## WORCESTER COUNTY.

Population, (May, 1837,) . . . 96,551.

Number of Social Libraries, . . . . .	54
Number of volumes, . . . . .	11,134
Estimated value, . . . . .	\$7,038
Number of proprietors, or persons having access in their own right, . . . . .	2,912

One town has made no return, viz., Hubbardston, population, 1780.

\* For the numerous individual facts, of which the above is the aggregate, I am principally indebted to the Hon. Samuel A. Eliot, Mayor of the city, and *ex officio* chairman of the School Committee, who caused them to be collected for me. From the same source, I also derived the facts respecting the Lyceums and Lectures in the city.



## HAMPSHIRE COUNTY.

Population, (May, 1837,) . . . . .	30,413.
Number of Social Libraries, . . . . .	17
Number of volumes, . . . . .	3,339
Estimated value, . . . . .	\$2,415
Number of proprietors, or persons having access in their own right, . . . . .	626

## HAMPDEN COUNTY.

Population, (May, 1837,) . . . . .	33,627.
Number of Social Libraries, . . . . .	17
Number of volumes, . . . . .	5,173
Estimated value, . . . . .	\$3,698
Number of proprietors, or persons having access in their own right, . . . . .	492

## FRANKLIN COUNTY.

Population, (May, 1837,) . . . . .	28,665.
Number of Social Libraries, . . . . .	11
Number of volumes, . . . . .	4,092
Estimated value, . . . . .	\$2,905
Number of proprietors, or persons having access in their own right, . . . . .	1,147

One town has made no return, viz., Sunderland, population, 729.

## BERKSHIRE COUNTY.

Population, (May, 1837,) . . . . .	39,101.
Number of Social Libraries, . . . . .	17
Number of volumes, . . . . .	3,780
Estimated value, . . . . .	\$2,259
Number of proprietors, or persons having access in their own right, . . . . .	405

Five towns have made no returns, viz., Becket, population, 957; Clarksburgh, population, 386; Mount Washington, population, 377; New Marlboro', population, 1,570; Windsor, population, 887. Total population not heard from, in Berkshire county, 4,177.

## NORFOLK COUNTY.

Population, (May, 1837,) . . . . .	50,399.
Number of Social Libraries, . . . . .	30
Number of volumes, . . . . .	14,331
Estimated value, . . . . .	\$7,567
Number of proprietors, or persons having access in their own right, . . . . .	2,591

## BRISTOL COUNTY.

Population, (May, 1837,) . . . . .	58,152.
Number of Social Libraries, . . . . .	8
Number of volumes, . . . . .	5,725
Estimated value, . . . . .	\$5,280
Number of proprietors, or persons having access in their own right, . . . . .	822

## PLYMOUTH COUNTY.

Population, (May, 1837,) . . . . .	46,253.
Number of Social Libraries, . . . . .	27
Number of volumes, . . . . .	5,359
Estimated value, . . . . .	\$2,602
Number of proprietors, or persons having access in their own right, . . . . .	930

## BARNSTABLE COUNTY.

Population, (May, 1837,) . . . . .	31,109.
Number of Social Libraries, . . . . .	6
Number of volumes, . . . . .	1,110
Estimated value, . . . . .	\$933
Number of proprietors, or persons having access in their own right, . . . . .	310

## DUKES COUNTY.

Population, (May, 1837,) . . . . .	3,785.
Number of Social Libraries, . . . . .	1
Number of volumes, . . . . .	250
Estimated value, not given.	
Number of proprietors, or persons having access in their own right, . . . . .	56

## NANTUCKET COUNTY.

Population, (May, 1837,) . . . . .	9,048.
Number of Social Libraries, (Athenæum,) . . . . .	1
Number of volumes, . . . . .	2,300
Estimated value, not given.	
Number of proprietors, or persons having access in their own right, . . . . .	400

*Recapitulation.*

Aggregate of Social Libraries in the State, . . . . .	299
Number of volumes, . . . . .	180,028
Estimated value, . . . . .	\$191,538
Number of proprietors, or persons having access in their own right, . . . . .	25,705
Number of towns not heard from, . . . . .	16
Total population not heard from, . . . . .	20,966

In addition to the above, there are, in the State, from ten to fifteen *town* libraries ; that is, libraries, to which all the citizens of the town have a right of access. They contain, in the aggregate, from three to four thousand volumes, and their estimated value is about fourteen hundred dollars.

There are, also, about fifty district school libraries, containing about ten thousand volumes, worth, by estimation, about thirty-two or thirty-three hundred dollars.

The "Coffin School," (incorporated,) at Nantucket, has a library of fourteen hundred volumes. A few of the academies have small libraries, but I have not been able to ascertain the number of volumes, or their value.

There are, also, a few circulating libraries in different parts of the State ; probably, the number, out of the city of Boston, does not exceed twenty.

From these results, it appears, that the books belonging to the public, so-

cial libraries, in the city of Boston, constitute almost one half of all the books in the social libraries of the State ; and yet, but about one tenth part of the population of the city has a right of access to them. If we include the circulating libraries, much more than one half of all the volumes, in this class of libraries, is in the city.

If we suppose that each proprietor or share-holder, in the social libraries, represents, on an average, four persons, (and this, considering the number of share-holders who are not heads of families, is, probably, a full allowance,) the population, represented by them, as having access to all the social libraries in the State, will be a small fraction over one hundred thousand ; leaving a population of more than six hundred thousand, who have no such right of access.

To come as near to exactness as practicable, it ought to be added, that, in a few instances, very small libraries have been referred to, in the returns, the particulars respecting which, my informants thought it not worth while to ascertain ; and, also, that, in a very few cases, the number of volumes, their value, and the number of proprietors, have been omitted in the returns. Probably, six per cent., added to the above returns, would be an ample allowance for all these omissions. On the other hand, it is to be observed, that, in many cases, the number of books has been taken from the catalogues of the libraries, without any deduction for missing volumes ; and that the same individual has, in some instances, a right in two or more libraries ; and, therefore, has been counted twice, or more, as a proprietor.

The number of volumes, composing the libraries of the principal public, literary, and scientific, institutions in the State, is as follows :

Harvard University, including the students' libraries, contains a little more than fifty thousand volumes.

The library of Williams College contains four thousand volumes, and that of the "Adelphic Union," a society connected with the college, eighteen hundred volumes. Total, five thousand eight hundred volumes.

The college and society libraries, at Amherst College, contain thirteen thousand volumes.

The several libraries connected with the different departments of the Institution, at Andover, contain but little less than twenty thousand volumes.

The American Antiquarian Society, at Worcester, has a library of more than twelve thousand volumes. It has fifteen thousand separate tracts, bound up in one thousand and thirty-five volumes ; and it has, also, one thousand two hundred and fifty-one volumes of newspapers.

Thus, omitting the circulating libraries, it appears, that the aggregate of volumes, in the public libraries of all kinds, in the State, is about three hundred thousand. This is also exclusive of the Sabbath school libraries, which will be adverted to, hereafter. To these three hundred thousand volumes, but little more than one hundred thousand persons, or one seventh part of the population of the State, have any right of access, while more than six hundred thousand have no right therein.

Of the towns heard from, there are one hundred, (almost one third of the whole number in the State,) which have neither a town, social, nor district school, library therein. What strikes us with amazement, in looking at these facts, is, the inequality with which the means of knowledge are spread over the surface of the State ;—a few deep, capacious reservoirs, surrounded by broad wastes. It has long been a common remark, that many persons read too much ; but here we have proof, how many thousands read too little. For the poor man and the laboring man, the art of printing seems hardly yet to have been discovered.

The next question respects the character of the books, composing the libraries, and their adaptation to the capacities and mental condition of children and youth. In regard to this point, there is, as might be expected, but little diversity of statement. Almost all the answers concur in the opin-



ion, that the contents of the libraries are not adapted to the intellectual and moral wants of the young,—an opinion, which a reference to the titles, in the catalogues, will fully sustain. With very few exceptions, the books were written for adults, for persons of some maturity of mind, and possessed, already, of a considerable fund of information ; and, therefore, they could not be adapted to children, except through mistake. Of course, in the whole, collectively considered, there is every kind of books ; but probably no other kind, which can be deemed of a useful character, occupies so much space upon the shelves of the libraries, as the historical class. Some of the various histories of Greece and Rome ; the History of Modern Europe, by Russell ; of England, by Hume and his successors ; Robertson's Charles V. ; Mavor's Universal History ; the numerous Histories of Napoleon, and similar works, constitute the staple of many libraries. And how little do these books contain, which is suitable for children ! How little do they record, but the destruction of human life, and the activity of those misguided energies of men, which have hitherto almost baffled the beneficent intentions of Nature for human happiness ! Descriptions of battles, sackings of cities, and the captivity of nations, follow each other, with the quickest movement, and in an endless succession. Almost the only glimpses which we catch, of the education of youth, present them, as engaged in martial sports, and in mimic feats of arms, preparatory to the grand tragedies of battle ; exercises and exhibitions, which, both in the performer and the spectator, cultivate all the dissocial emotions, and turn the whole current of the mental forces into the channel of destructiveness. The reader sees inventive genius, not employed in perfecting the useful arts, but exhausting itself in the manufacture of implements of war. He sees rulers and legislators, not engaged in devising comprehensive plans for universal welfare, but in levying and equipping armies and navies, and extorting taxes to maintain them, thus dividing the whole mass of the people into the two classes of slaves and soldiers ; enforcing the degradation and servility of tame animals, upon the former, and cultivating the ferocity and bloodthirstiness of wild animals, in the latter. The highest honors are conferred upon men, in whose rolls of slaughter the most thousands of victims are numbered ; and seldom does woman emerge from her obscurity,—indeed, hardly should we know that she existed,—but for her appearance, to grace the triumphs of the conqueror. What a series of facts would be indicated, by an examination of all the treaties of peace, which history records ; they would appear like a grand index to universal plunder. The inference which children would legitimately draw, from reading like this, would be, that the tribes and nations of men had been created, only for mutual slaughter, and that they deserved the homage of posterity, for the terrible fidelity with which their mission had been fulfilled. Rarely do these records administer any antidote against the inhumanity of the spirit they instil. In the immature minds of children, unaccustomed to consider events, under the relation of cause and effect, they excite the conception of magnificent palaces or temples, for bloody conquerors to dwell in, or in which to offer profane worship for inhuman triumphs, without a suggestion of the bondage and debasement of the myriads of slaves, who, through lives of privation and torture, were compelled to erect them ; they present an exciting picture of long trains of plundered wealth, going to enrich some city or hero, without an intimation, that, by industry and the arts of peace, the same wealth could have been earned, more cheaply than it was robbed ; they exhibit the triumphal return of warriors, to be crowned with honors worthy of a god, while they take the mind wholly away from the carnage of the battle-field, from desolated provinces, and a mourning people. In all this, it is true, there are many examples of the partial and limited virtue of patriotism ; but few, only, of the complete virtue of philanthropy. The courage, held up for admiration, is generally of that animal nature, which rushes into danger, to inflict injury

upon another ; but not of that Divine quality, which braves peril, for the sake of bestowing good,—attributes, than which there are scarcely any two in the souls of men, more different, though the baseness of the former is so often mistaken for the nobleness of the latter. Indeed, if the past history of our race is to be much read by children, it should be re-written ; and, while it records those events, which have contravened all the principles of social policy, and violated all the laws of morality and religion, there should, at least, be some recognition of the great truth, that, among nations, as among individuals, the highest welfare of all can only be effected, by securing the individual welfare of each. There should be some parallel drawn, between the *historical* and the *natural* relations of the race, so that the tender and immature mind of the youthful reader may have some opportunity of comparing the right with the wrong, and some option of admiring and emulating the former, instead of the latter. As much of history now stands, the examples of right and wrong, whose nativity and residence are on opposite sides of the moral universe, are not merely brought and shuffled together, so as to make it difficult to distinguish between them ; but the latter are made to occupy almost the whole field of vision, while the existence of the former is scarcely noticed. It is, as though children should be taken to behold, from afar, the light of a city on fire, and directed to admire the splendor of the conflagration, without a thought of the tumult, and terror, and death, reigning beneath it.

Another very considerable portion of these libraries, especially where they have been recently formed or replenished, consists of novels, and all that class of books, which is comprehended under the familiar designations of “fictions,” “light reading,” “trashy works,” “ephemeral,” or “bubble literature,” &c. This kind of books has increased, immeasurably, within the last twenty years. It has insinuated itself into public libraries, and found the readiest welcome with people, who are not dependent upon libraries, for the books they peruse. Aside from newspapers, I am satisfied, that the major part of the *unprofessional* reading of the community is of the class of books, above designated. Amusement is the object,—mere *amusement*, as contradistinguished from instruction, in the practical concerns of life ; as contradistinguished from those intellectual and moral impulses, which turn the mind, both while reading and after the book is closed, to observation, and comparison, and reflection, upon the great realities of existence.

That reading, merely for amusement, has its fit occasions and legitimate office, none will deny. The difficulty of the practical problem consists, in adhering to that line of reasonable indulgence, which lies between mental dissipation, on the one hand, and a denial of all relaxation, on the other. Life is too full of solemn duties, to be regarded as a long play-day ; while incessant toil lessens the ability for useful labor. In feeble health, or after sickness, or severe bodily or mental labor, an amusing, captivating, enlivening, book, which levies no tax upon the powers of thought, for the pleasure it gives, is a delightful resource. It is medicinal to the sick, and recuperative to the wearied mind. Especially is this the case, where a part, only, of the faculties have been intensely exerted. Then, to stimulate those which have lain inactive, brings the quickest relief to those which have been laboring. It is not repose to them, merely ; but repose, as it were, tranquillized by music. But the difference is altogether incalculable and immense, between reading such books as an amusement, only, and reading them as restorers from fatigue, or as soothers in distress ; between indulging in them as a relaxation or change from deep mental engrossment,

(To be continued.)

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